

Norwalk, CT
February 28, 2019

Chairmen McCrory and Sanchez, Ranking Members Berthel and McCarty, and esteemed members of the Education Committee;

Thank you for allowing me to submit testimony on HB 7150 - AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING EDUCATION.

I oppose this bill because it unfairly pushes down to municipalities pension costs for teachers that are the responsibility of the state.

I have been a resident of Norwalk for 22 years and I am raising three children who all have attended the Norwalk Public School system. I have been an active parent since my older child attended elementary school and I am presently serving my second turn on our high school Governance Council.

As a parent, taxpayer, and an active stakeholder in our school community, I can attest to the financial strain this bill would cause Norwalk. The State only funds around 10% of our school budget although over 55% of our students qualify for free or reduced lunch. Pushing down pension costs will lead to increased property taxes or the defunding of programs necessary for our children's education.

The impact of this bill for Norwalk would be \$1.1 million in 2020, \$2.2 million in 2021, and \$3.3 million in 2022 and thereafter. And of course, all of this will surely increase in the future. To put things in prospective, our current ECS funding is around \$11 million. Therefore, this proposal would be the equivalent of a reduction in state funding for Norwalk of 10% next year, 20% in 2 years, and 30% in three years. This is radical.

I am also disturbed by the penalty inflicted on school districts that pay teachers above the state average. First, no allowance is made for the differences in the cost of living between regions. Secondly, and most importantly, it creates an incentive for school districts to push down teachers' salaries. It will create strain of the relationship between teachers and districts as communities fight to avoid the penalty they can't afford. It will also affect our ability to compete for the best, most qualified applicants which is a disservice to our kids.

Thank you again for the opportunity to submit my testimony against HB 7150.

Isabelle Hargrove
Norwalk, CT